

Starry Paints

Description:

Children will look at the art of Vincent van Gogh to learn how they can use color mixing and bold brush strokes to express an idea.

Materials:

thick white paper, paint, paintbrushes, water and containers, flour, craft sticks, reproductions of van Gogh paintings including *The Starry Night* (from the local library or from www.art.com)

Preparation:

This activity works best with thick acrylic paint. If all you have is tempera or poster paint, simply add enough white flour to give the paint some thickness. Mix up small amounts of the paint and flour mixture in old margarine containers. If the paint gets too thick, add water.



Procedure:

Show your child paintings by Vincent van Gogh, including *Fourteen Sunflowers in a Vase* and *The Starry Night*. Ask your child what she notices about the paint. Does it swirl? Do the bursts of color appear to move? Talk about van Gogh's brush strokes and his use of very thick paint. Explain that he liked to leave the marks of the brush in the paint. Van Gogh mixed his colors as he painted, letting them blend together on the canvas. Have your child do a "Starry Night" painting, experimenting with the thick paint, adding swirls of color to the painting, and allowing colors to mix on the paper. She may wish to start with swirls of dark blue for the sky and add smaller swirls of white to create light blue areas of paint. Once the blues and whites of the sky are dry, smaller swirls of orange and yellow can be added to depict stars.

Extension:

Have a Starry Night Party! Buy white napkins and cups, and let your child paint them with bold brush strokes. If you laminate your child's painting, it can be used as a place mat for the party. Bake a cake and have your child help decorate it with thick icing in shades of blue, orange, and yellow.

Just for Kids:

Look at the work of Vincent van Gogh and notice the colors he uses. The sky in van Gogh's *Starry Night* has paint strokes of orange, red, purple, and green. His self-portraits have streaks of blue, orange, red, and brown. Artists who use colors to express a feeling or an emotion are known as Expressionists. Today you are going to paint with Expressionist colors and brush strokes. Use your paintbrush to leave marks in the paint. You can mix many colors together on your paper, but don't forget to clean your brush when changing colors.

